

Symposium 2 - EIE2023

#136- Capacity building in global implementation science – training, planning and sustaining interventions in various contexts.

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Introduction to your symposium

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development urges international support for implementing effective capacity building, through strengthening the skills and resources that communities need to adapt and sustain transformation (United Nations, 2022). Sustainment is key for successful implementation. To understand factors important for sustainment, an understanding of the whole implementation process is key, and may include training of implementers, planning, and the actual implementation. Implementation research projects from Germany, Norway, and the Netherlands will present experiences with capacity building in global settings, with the aim of learning from each other to provide more effective and sustainable interventions in various contexts.

Symposium abstract Nr. 1

Although most intervention studies discuss the importance of capacity building to facilitate sustainability, few studies report on specific strategies used to ensure this, and even fewer are conducted in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs, Hailemariam et al., 2019). This presentation will introduce the TREAT INTERACT project, where the main aim is to develop, implement, and evaluate the impact of an intersectoral program to identify and prevent mental health problems in children and adolescents in Uganda, with a special focus on sustainability and capacity building. To do this, we will implement a task-shifting program for sustainable, large-scale evidence-informed mental health strategies through the Mental Health Gap Action Programme Intervention Guide (mhGAP-IG), launched by the World Health Organization. The presentation will outline steps taken to ensure capacity by integrating the mhGAP in the existing health and education infrastructures, and by prioritizing stakeholder involvement.

Symposium abstract Nr. 2

Capacity building in implementation research and implementation of interventions in low and middle-income countries remains an important area of focus but is often under prioritized. This presentation will draw upon experience and lessons learned through two case studies: the RECOVER-E project, a European Commission Horizon 2020 funded program implemented by 16 partners in 5 countries in Central and Eastern Europe focused on implementing a community-based model of specialized mental health care, and SPIRIT, a U.S NIMH funded collaborative hub for suicide prevention in India, Bangladesh, and the

Netherlands. In both projects, multiple capacity building strategies were implemented to build capacity of community members, healthcare workers, policymakers and researchers in mental health. This presentation will outline the implementation strategies used to build, as well as highlight challenges to address in future work, including supervision and mentoring structures, ways to use implementation research findings in policy dialogues, and co-creating intervention approaches with community members.

Symposium abstract Nr. 3

To develop capacity in health-related implementation science in Germany, a 2-year full-time Master of Science program for health services research and implementation science was started at Heidelberg University in 2015, funded by the Ministry of Education of the state Baden-Württemberg, Germany. Yearly 20 students start and about 100 have completed the program so far. The program comprises modules on implementation science, quality management and organizational development as well as more generic modules on the principles and methods of scientific research. The development of the program was accompanied by evaluations of students' and teachers' experiences and studies on job perspectives. The key findings of this research will be presented and discussed at the conference with a view on lessons for developing capacity for implementation science.

Key highlights of your symposium

Capacity building should be a vital part of any implementation project. Lessons learned from this symposium will provide guidance to future projects on how to ensure sustainment. We will outline different parts of implementation research and practice, from training of students, planning a project to actual implementation.

Implications for research and practice

Capacity building is vital for the successful usage of knowledge derived from implementation science. This symposium will facilitate a knowledge exchange between three different crucial stages in implementation science and practice. Sharing of knowledge will help building research capacity the field of global implementation research.

Overall discussion

- How to include research questions related to capacity-building in implementation research projects.
- How to involve policy-makers in capacity-building activities in implementation research.